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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the discourse on Aboriginal higher education in Australia from the 1960s through the 1990s through an analysis of educational reports and government policy documents on tertiary education. Early in this period, the focus was on education as "welfare," but the emphasis shifted towards equity in higher education policy during the late 1980s and early 1990s. During this latter period, Aboriginal people were considered educationally disadvantaged, and education was seen as a means of providing equal opportunity for all and diminishing indicators of social inequalities. Another competing viewpoint represents Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians as an Indigenous population with Indigenous rights to self-determination and control of its own education. The way in which Indigenous Australians are represented shapes the discussion and funding of Indigenous education. For example, when Indigenous Australians were represented as disadvantaged, improvement in tertiary education was evaluated in terms of the number of Aboriginal students enrolled and the number of "successful" graduates. There was an increase in Aboriginal participation in tertiary education between 1985 and 1996, but assimilationist and ethnocentric institutional structures did not change to increase Aboriginal participation in curriculum development, research, and teaching. Since 1998, a renewed emphasis on a welfare approach to Aboriginal education has been accompanied by a reallocation of resources away from tertiary education and greater emphasis on basic literacy. The recognition and inclusion of Indigenous rights in educational policy depends upon a new phase of politics. (Contains 60 references.) (TD)

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the emergence of a discourse on 'Aboriginal Education' from the 1960s through to the 1990s in Australia. It contrasts the initial focus on education as 'welfare' during this early period with the shift in emphasis towards equity in higher education policy during the late 1980s and early 1990s. During this latter period education was seen as a means of providing equal opportunity for all individuals and diminishing indicators of social inequalities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The paper highlights how a creative tension has emerged between the objectives of equity and Indigenous rights within tertiary education in a post-Mabo era while there has been a renewed emphasis on 'welfare' in 'Indigenous Affairs' in contemporary Australia under the Howard Government. The research is based on a discursive analysis of educational reports and government policy documents on tertiary education from 1964 through to the 1996.

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Introduction

In 1992 the High Court judgement on the 'Mabo case' recognised the Indigenous population of Australia as the original 'owners' of this land and that the colonisation of Australia had not erased Indigenous rights to land (Stephenson and Ratnapala, 1993). In 1998 the Northern Territory Government has abandoned a policy of bilingual education thirty years after its inception and the federal Coalition Government recently announced that ABSTUDY would no longer be funded beyond the year 2000. This paper seeks to address how two such starkly contrasting discourses are played out within the education arena in contemporary Australia.

Public attention and academic debate following the *Mabo* ruling has focused on those Indigenous rights to land. Land has increasingly become the terrain over which Indigenous rights has been debated within the political and legal arenas in liberal democratic nation states such as Australia. By contrast, in areas such as health and education there appears to be less attention accorded to Indigenous rights and a greater emphasis on equity programs which aim to reduce the indicators of inequality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. This paper explores rights and equity in the arena of tertiary education. In particular it explores the significance of representations of Aboriginality in shaping Government policy and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in tertiary education.

Central to this endeavour is an analysis of the tensions between objectives associated with the recognition and inclusion of Indigenous rights and the emphasis on equity during the 1980s and the more recent shift to what is identified as a 'welfare' approach to Indigenous education in the 1990s. Hence, this research explores one example of the ways in which issues of equity and rights for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are perceived within the institutional structures in contemporary Australian society.

It explores the tensions generated by government policy and programs which seek to redress inequality while also addressing issues associated with the recognition and inclusion of Indigenous rights. In this process, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are identified and categorised as a disadvantaged group while also being an Indigenous population with associated collective rights. In the past, the response of Australian tertiary education providers to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population has been one of almost complete exclusion. For example, in 1972 there were less than 100 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Australians enrolled in higher education nationally. Subsequently, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student enrolments increased from less than 1,000 in 1982 to over 3,000 in 1989, while enrolments for 1995 exceeded 7,800 (DEET, 1987b, 102; 1994a, 33).

Since the 1980s a number of government reports, documents and policy statements have addressed the issue of Indigenous participation at all levels of education in Australia. In these documents Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been identified as an 'educationally disadvantaged group', indicative of a corresponding shift in government policy, during the mid 1980s through to the mid 1990s, towards an emphasis on access and equity in the provision of tertiary education (DEET, 1987a; 1987b; 1988b; 1989a; 1990a). In parallel with this development a Task Force of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians was set up by the commonwealth, state and territory governments to carry out a process of consultation with Indigenous communities with the aim of developing a national 'Aboriginal Education Policy'. In 1989 the results of this process, the AEP, was adopted by the state, territory and commonwealth governments in Australia. In 1994 the 'National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy' was reviewed, with the 'National Review of Education For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People' being tabled in October 1994.

This paper is based on a discursive analysis of such educational reports and government policy documents on Indigenous participation in tertiary education from 1964 through to the 1996. For this task I draw on Foucault and discourse analysis (see Fairclough, 1992; Attwood, 1992). Foucault (1979, 27) argues that: "There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations." In the Australian context, Morris (1992, 72) and others have argued that colonial relations are constituted through the '...exercise and interplay of power and knowledge' (see also Attwood, 1992; Langton, 1993). Foucault argues that power is productive and this is the basis of his emphasis on discourse and discursive practices. Foucault (1988a, 103) was not concerned with the distribution of power, or 'who exercises power', but rather how it happens. For example, Foucault (1979) focused on the emergence of modern technologies of power associated with the parallel development of the human sciences and such institutional structures of the state as schools, prisons, and hospitals. He analysed the development of prisons as a specific technology of power to illustrate '...the power of normalization and the formation of knowledge in modern society' (Foucault, 1979, 308).

The initial section of this paper provides a brief review of the development of a discourse on 'Aboriginal education' from the 1960s and 70s. This is followed by a discussion on the analytical themes identified within government policy documents and reports over the period from 1987-1996.

The Development of Government Policy on 'Aboriginal Education': 1964-1986

Up to the early 1980s, the response of Australian tertiary education providers to Indigenous Australia was one of almost total exclusion. Publications on Aboriginal education during the late 1960s (see Dunn and Tatz, 1969; Roper, 1969) pointed to this low level of Indigenous participation at all levels of education and the inequality in education outcomes between

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and the non-Indigenous population. This was officially recognised as a 'problem' by the Australian Government from the mid 1960s and early 1970s following increasing expressions of concern from academic, student and community groups (Watts and Gallacher, 1964; Duke, 1972).

In 1963 the Minister of State for Territories in the Commonwealth Government commissioned a report to investigate the curriculum and teaching methods used in Aboriginal schools in the Northern Territory. The Watts and Gallacher (1964) report, as it became known after its authors, reviewed the development of Aboriginal education and noted that up to the late 1930s the responsibility for the education of Aboriginal children and adults remained under the control of mission organisations.

A policy of assimilation was adopted by the Commonwealth Government in 1937 and this policy was based on the premise that '...any attempt at assimilation would have to be preceded by some system of education for Aboriginal people' (Watts and Gallacher, 1964, 31). The Watts and Gallacher (1964) report is an example of the way in which up until the late 1960s Indigenous Australians were represented as an undifferentiated 'tribal' Other based on both anthropological studies on 'Aborigines' and personal knowledge of welfare officers and mission staff.

This is illustrated in the following citations on 'tribal beliefs and customs' from the Watts and Gallacher (1964) report which draws from a body of anthropological knowledge from the 1930s and other texts on 'Aborigines': "Educative, as well as economic, functions are also generalised beyond the family and through the kinship system..." (Meggitt, M. 1962 cited by Watts and Gallacher, 1964, 18).

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The four volume fifteen hundred page report by Watts (1981; 1982), commissioned by Education Research and Development Committee to review policy developments in the 'education of Aborigines' from 1968 to 1978, illustrates the way in which 'Aboriginal education' became the subject of intense investigation during the 1970s. In this report, Watts (1981, 351) reviews 27 reports and publications on 'Aborigines' published between 1971 and 1978, including 15 research reports on Aboriginal education funded through the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (1981, 1325-6).

Equity is a major theme within the report, illustrated by the prominence given at the beginning of the Report to a quote by the National Aboriginal Education Committee: 'Educational practices and policies have to be developed to enable Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders to gain equality as Australian citizens in Australian society' (Submission to the National Inquiry into Teacher Education, 1979, iv; cited by Watts, 1981, iii). The Watts (1981) report exemplifies, indeed it was the model for, many of the subsequent reports and policy documents on educating 'Aborigines' in the early 1980s. It also illustrates - in its construction of 'Aboriginal' education precisely the ways in which the representations of Aboriginality in education discourse have constructed 'Aboriginal education'.

Two substantive reports on 'Aboriginal education' were released in 1985, the Jordan and Blanchard Reports. These documents are associated with a subsequent shift in government policy in the mid to late 1980s. This shift led to substantial increases in the allocation of resources to tertiary education institutions which led in turn to a very large increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in tertiary education.

The Jordan report (1985) focused on the provision of support systems to facilitate Aboriginal participation in higher education while the Blanchard Report (1985) examined the relatively low

levels of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation at all levels of education. The Jordan Report notes that Aboriginal tertiary education primarily developed through the establishment of special Aboriginal enclave programs located within institutions of higher education across Australia, and to a lesser extent through the establishment of Indigenous institutions of tertiary education. Following the release of the Jordan report there was a substantive increase in the number of Aboriginal and Islander support units, or enclaves, within institutions, from 19 in 1984 to 58 in 1989.

The Jordan Report clearly represents Aboriginal Australians as a disadvantaged group. Its introduction, for example, states quite unequivocally that:

> Institutions of higher education in the last decade came to recognise the needs of people who had been deprived, for various reasons, of the normal access to higher education...in 1985 places will be funded in higher education institutions for people from disadvantaged backgrounds (CTEC, 1985, 1).

The Report goes on to portray Aboriginal students' family background and life experiences as drawbacks which do not 'provide a model of academic achievement' or promote 'the ability to interact with elements of the educational environment' (CTEC, 1985, 3-4). This disadvantage is seen as comprehensive and complete - 'for Aboriginal students, there is both a background of disorganisation within the students' parental situation, and...disorganisation in their own personal lives...' (CTEC, 1985, 3-4). While acknowledging the 'prevalence of negative stereotyping of Aboriginal people' the low level of academic achievement is linked with 'deficiencies in past learning' of the Aboriginal people themselves (CTEC, 1985, 3-4).

The role of the enclave program in meeting the personal and academic needs of Aboriginal students is framed by the representation of these students as disadvantaged, with programs required to 'fill in the gaps in past educational experiences', 'provide personal support,

introducing the student to social welfare networks', and 'promote a positive sense of Aboriginal identity' (CTEC, 1985, 6-7).

The Blanchard Report was tabled by the House of Representatives Select Committee on Aboriginal Education in September 1985. The Committee was established in the early 1980s and focused on the level of Aboriginal achievement and attainment at all levels of education. The report's findings focused on the need for the attainment of increased levels in equality of educational opportunity and outcome for Aboriginal people, outlined in the introduction:

> Education in Australia has as its central tenet the attainment of greater equality of educational opportunities and outcomes. Such equality does not yet exist for Aboriginal people and the Committee has concluded that there is a continuing need for special educational programs for Aboriginal people to enable improved educational attainment to be achieved (House of Representatives Select Committee on Aboriginal Education, 1985, 1).

In contrast to the Jordan Report, the Blanchard Report represents a shift in policy from 'welfare' towards 'equity' in education by the then Hawke Labor Government. While there is an ongoing emphasis on '...special educational programs for Aboriginal people' (House of Representatives Select Committee on Aboriginal Education, 1985, 1), the report emphasises the need to increase the levels of educational attainment by Aboriginal people. The report constructs the 'problem' in terms of the low levels of achievement and attainment in education by 'Aboriginal people in the national education system' relative to the general population. The problem of Aboriginal education is defined in the Blanchard Report (1985, 21) as lower levels of access; lower levels of achievement; lower retention rates, particularly at secondary school; and often inadequate or inappropriate curriculum. The report concludes that while acknowledging the diversity, Aboriginal educational needs can be 'almost universally grouped' under two fundamental objectives for Aboriginal people "...to acquire knowledge and skills to enable them to live in the wider Australian society but also that they be able to retain Aboriginal identity and lifestyle" (House of Representatives Select Committee on Aboriginal Education, 1985, 35).

Towards Equity: 1987-1996

The Jordan and Blanchard reports had a significant effect on the development and application of government policy and the allocation of resources in the raid to late 1980s as did the formation of the Department of Employment Education and Training (DEET) in 1986/87 and subsequent reports on higher education[1]. With the re-election of the Labor Government in May 1987 there was a restructuring of Government departments leading to the formation of the Department of Employment, Education, and Training (DEET), and a review of the traditional university and CAE binary higher education structure in Australia (Davies, 1989; DEET 1987a; DEET, 1988a). The newly formed Department placed a greater level of emphasis on the relationship between education and employment. The levels of unemployment were believed to be directly associated with the lower levels of educational participation and achievement in higher education among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (DEET, 1987c).

Equity was also a feature of the 1987 Higher Education discussion paper (DEET, 1987b), and the Higher Education policy statement issued in July 1988 (DEET, 1988a) which identified three population groups as disadvantaged: 'people from financially disadvantaged backgrounds; people from rural and isolated areas; and Aboriginal people' (DEET, 1987a, 21). The Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force (DEET, 1988b) is an example of an Indigenous committee established under government auspices to implement a consultative process between the Government and Indigenous communities with the intention of furthering Indigenous self-determination.

The report by the Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force informed the development of the Aboriginal Education Policy, referred to as the AEP (DEET, 1988b). The report begins with an introductory statement based on the 'right of citizens' to education. This places an emphasis on

the relatively disadvantaged position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders at all levels of education. The report by the Task Force identifies equity and self-determination as the two cornerstones of Indigenous education. However, in its recommendations regarding the allocation of resources, the report does little to facilitate self-determination or address the structures of mainstream tertiary institutions and the content of courses and curricula.

Government policy documents continue to be primarily shaped by the representation of Indigenous Australians as disadvantaged, and an urban/traditional dichotomy. Self-management and self-determination are only minor themes within Indigenous education and become secondary to the pursuit of equity. An emphasis on equity is continued in the document formulated by DEET in 1989 and referred to as the AEP, a Joint Policy Statement by the state, territory, and Commonwealth governments along with the National Aboriginal Education Reference Group. The AEP reflected two main themes, 'Aboriginal needs and aspirations', and equity. The AEP has four main purposes:

1. to ensure Aboriginal involvement in educational decision making;
2. to provide equity of access for Aboriginal people to educational services;
3. to raise the rates of Aboriginal participation in education to those for all Australians;
4. to achieve equitable and appropriate educational outcomes for Aboriginal people.

(1989b, 1)

The purpose of the national policy is represented in two main sections, the first, 'Responding to Aboriginal needs and aspirations', and the second, 'Promoting educational equity' (DEET, 1989a, 9). The goals of the National Policy are to facilitate the '...involvement of Aboriginal people in educational decision-making' and 'equity' between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians (DEET, 1989a, 14). There is considerable emphasis on equity in terms of access, participation, and outcomes (DEET, 1989a, 14-5).

However in terms of funding allocation, there is an overwhelming emphasis on the provision of Aboriginal student places within tertiary educational institutions, and no allocation towards staff development, Aboriginal and Islander academic career development, or course and curriculum development (DEET, 1989a). In summary, unlike the Blanchard Report and other documents discussed above, the AEP pays some attention to the principles of self-management and self-determination outlined in the policy on Aboriginal Affairs, but in terms of concrete strategies and the allocation of resources it is the principle of equity which is operationalised.

The inter-relationship between equity and disadvantage continues as a common feature of government policy documents published during the late 1980s, as illustrated in 'A chance for the future', a parliamentary report on 'Training in skills for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Community Management and Development', by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs (1989). In this document Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are represented as members of Indigenous 'communities', in contrast with the broader Australian population which is portrayed as a constituency of autonomous and economically independent individuals. Hence, the policy of self-determination is interpreted and implemented through the establishment of Indigenous committees and groups who act on behalf of the Indigenous population generally. In particular, this report identifies Aboriginal education as a key to the achievement of Aboriginal self-determination and self-management.

The emphasis on equity within tertiary education is continued into the early 1990s with the DEET discussion paper on 'National and Institutional Planning for Equity in Higher Education' released in February 1990 (DEET, 1990), titled 'A fair chance for all'. Equity is the main theme of this discussion paper, as the foreword by John Dawkins, then Minister for Technical and Further Education indicates:

> Social justice is a keystone of Labor policy. All Australian have the right to access the services and benefits our society offers and to contribute to our social, cultural and industrial endeavours. This Government is committed to the achievement of a fairer and more just society, and working towards the removal of the barriers which prevent people from many groups in our society from participating fully in the life of our community (DEET, 1990, iii).

The report of this Committee states that: 'A prominent theme in evidence on this topic was the importance of ensuring that higher education curriculum does not alienate students from Aboriginal backgrounds, either because of its content or in the way it is taught' (1990, 114). The emphasis on curriculum reform, facilitating a more inclusive curriculum, is a feature of a competing theme within education discourse, one that accords greater emphasis to the inclusion of Indigenous rights within education in Australia.

An emphasis on Indigenous rights is reflected in another DEET funded project on career development needs in higher education which showed that staff in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander higher education were marginalised within their institutions (DEET, 1991). The report recommends that tertiary institutions should support Indigenous staff in their professional development (DEET, 1991, xiii). A major feature of this report is the significance accorded to institutional reform in order to increase the level of participation by Indigenous Australians in teaching and research.

In summary, an analysis of DEET policy and evaluation documents between 1987 and 1993 shows that there is a continued emphasis on access and equity within tertiary institutions. There have yet to be significant changes in mainstream courses and curricula which address the level of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in curriculum development, research, and teaching. The review has also drawn out how the equity theme within education discourse addresses indicators of inequality such as access to tertiary education, in contrast to the theme associated with the recognition and inclusion of Indigenous rights, which places a greater

emphasis on institutional practices which limit the level of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in teaching, research, and senior management.

In February 1994, five years after the adoption of the AEP, a discussion paper was released as the first stage of a Government review of the policy (DEET, 1994a). The summary and recommendations of this review were released in October 1994 (DEET, 1994b). The discussion paper is based on statistical data concerning the relative participation rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and the general Australian population (DEET, 1994a). However it pays little attention to the substance of courses and curricula, nor to the forms of the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff within tertiary education. The main body of the discussion paper (DEET, 1994a) and the 'statistical annex' (DEET, 1994c) are devoted to the demographics of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, and statistical evidence on the level of educational achievement for Indigenous Australians and is divided into two main groups, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in urban locations, and those in rural and remote areas.

The Review's summary and recommendations document begins with the statement that two principal themes emerged from the evidence presented to the review - 'equity and reconciliation':

Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders occupy a unique position in Australia - they are its first inhabitants and not just one of many ethnic minorities. We believe that Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders are the First Nations of this continent and have inalienable rights as the Indigenous people of Australia. The right to education is one of these rights.

(DEET, 1994b, 2). The review identifies equity as '...the basis of reconciliation' while self-determination is accorded a position of secondary concern. In summary, the equity theme from the 1980s is continued in the AEP review and this is illustrated by the 140 page 'statistical

annex' (DEET, 1994c) which focuses on the participation rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in contrast with the general population at all levels of education. The summary and recommendations document (DEET, 1994b, 2) begins by stating that: 'In 1994 Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders continue to be the most educationally disadvantaged groups in Australia.'

There is some indication that the international Indigenous rights movement has had a significant impact on the review. This is illustrated by the language and terminology employed in the report, such as the principles outlined in a prelude to the second recommendation which states that:
We consider that the work all Australians need to do to achieve equity and reconciliation in and through education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders must be based on two fundamentals:

- embracing the First Nations' heritage as part of Australia's national heritage; and
- respecting equally the culture and values of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders and cultures and values of non-indigenous Australians (1994b, 7).

The Review brings Indigenous rights and self-determination into much sharper focus. The use of such phrases as 'First Nations' suggests an awareness of the international Indigenous rights movement and of recent statements on Indigenous Rights such as the 'Coolangatta Statement' (1993) and the 'International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Nations' (United Nations, 1994) which accord a greater level of significance to the principle of Indigenous control over Indigenous education. However the equity theme which dominated policy on tertiary education in the 1980s still plays a significant role in this report; the 'statistical annex' collates figures on the relative participation rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and the Australian population generally while the 'summary and recommendation' document advocates equal opportunity and access to culturally appropriate education as the basis to reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

The Keating Government's response to the review continued to place an emphasis on equity (Commonwealth of Australia, 1995b, 1), stating that: 'The AEP has a theme of equity running through its long-term goals, and poses the fundamental questions that need to be addressed if educational equality is to be achieved by the turn of the century.' This public response drew attention to the relationship between: 'educational achievement and associated improvements in the social and economic conditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people' (Commonwealth of Australia, 1995b, 3). It contained many commitments to financial resources aimed at overcoming indicators of educational disadvantage and improving educational outcomes in the Government's response to the AEP review.[ii]

While the policy statement by the Keating Government acknowledges the need to involve Indigenous people at all levels of decision-making within education the primary focus continues to be on equity through the allocation of resources to increase the number of Indigenous students enrolled in the tertiary sector. There is an ongoing tension between the objectives of self-determination and equity within government policy. Self-determination places an emphasis on the right of Indigenous people to control Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education based on the concept of collective rights, while equity aims to diminish educational disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians and is associated with the principle of individual rights within liberal democratic traditions.

Government Policy from 1964-1996

The sections above have reviewed key policy papers and documents related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in tertiary education from 1964 to 1996. The common feature throughout these documents is the relationship drawn between access and equity within education and indicators of inequality on the one hand and representations of Aboriginality as

disadvantaged on the other. For example, the common representation of Aboriginality in the Jordan Report (CTEC, 1985) was one based on the personal and academic deficiency of Indigenous students. This contrasts with the Blanchard Report (House of Representatives Select Committee on Aboriginal Education, 1985) which highlights the educational disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians who are represented as a disadvantaged Other, and which has an associated emphasis on equity in education and training as a means to overcoming disadvantage.

Figure 1 provides a summary of the main features of the themes identified within the documents and policy statements reviewed.

Figure 1 Discourse on 'Aboriginal Education'

	Welfare	**Equity**	**Indigenous Rights**
Aboriginality	Traditional /Urban	Disadvantaged	First Nations
Tertiary Education	Compensatory Model	Access and Equity	Indigenous Control

This equity theme was dominant throughout the reports of the late 1980s and early 1990s. However, there was another competing representation of Aboriginality based on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians as an Indigenous population with an associated emphasis on Indigenous rights. The way in which Indigenous Australians are represented clearly constitutes the both the discussion and the allocation of resources in relation to Indigenous education and the associated emphasis on either Indigenous students or educational institutions. This can be illustrated in one aspect of the AEP review. For example the AEP Review (DEET, 1994a) places an emphasis on educational disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians. Between 1985

and 1996 there was a dramatic increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in tertiary education. Nevertheless, the shift towards equity has not addressed assimilationist and ethnocentric institutional structures and curricula within the mainstream tertiary education sector.

Government Policy 1996-2000

The re-election of the Howard Coalition Government in 1998 it can be argued that there has been a significant shift away from an emphasis on equity and a move towards placing a greater level of attention on Indigenous education as part of a welfare based 'Aboriginal Affairs' policy. With the associated cuts to the 'Aboriginal Affairs' budget there is a 'renewed' focus on health, housing, employment. This shift towards a welfare approach to Indigenous education significantly effects tertiary education as there is an associated re-allocation of distribution of educational resources away from tertiary education and a greater emphasis is places on basic literacy. While Indigenous Australians are represented as a disadvantaged group improvement in tertiary education is evaluated in terms of the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled and the number of 'successful' graduates. In this paper I have illustrated the way in which such measures of success are based on a discourse on 'Aboriginal education' from the 1960s which was founded on racist and romantic representations of Aboriginality. However, such representations have been challenged by the recognition of Indigenous rights within the legal and political arenas and a creative tension has emerged within the tertiary education arena.

Nonetheless, with the recent abandonment of a policy on bilingual education in the Northern Territory and the Howard Government's abolition of ABSTUDY the recognition and inclusion of Indigenous rights is dependent upon a new phase of politics. For Australia to be a more inclusive imagined community founded on cultural and linguistic difference, incorporating the notion of collective rights this new phase of politics of must address what can be identified as a 'crisis' in Australian identity and seeks to go beyond a representation of Australia as a 'white

nation' (Ghassan Hage, 1998; see also Jon Stratton, 1998). The challenge facing tertiary education providers in contemporary Australia is not only one which seeks to provide education on an equitable basis with limited resources, but to also recognise and include the rights of Indigenous Australians. Rights to learn Indigenous languages and the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges.

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[1] The Aboriginal Employment Development Policy launched in October 1987 (DEET, 1987c);
the report by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs (1989);
the report by the Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force (DEET, 1988b);
the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy, referred to as the AEP (DEET, 1989c);
the discussion paper on National and Institutional Planning for Equity in Higher Education by the Department of Employment Education and Training (DEET, 1990);
the report on Career Development in Aboriginal Higher Education (DEET, 1991);
the report on Equity in Higher Education (DEET, 1993a);

the discussion paper on the National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People (DEET, 1994a);
the National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People (DEET, 1994b); and
the policy statement, 'A National Strategy for the Education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples 1996 - 2002', prepared by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, (MCEETYA, 1995).

[i] The Government policy paper responding to the AEP Review (Commonwealth of Australia, 1995b) also acknowledges that many of the recommendations within the Review apply specifically to State and Territory governments and there is a corresponding allocation of $73 million towards Strategic Results projects identified by the 'Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs' (MCEETYA). The recommendations and strategies for education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples up to the year 2002 by the Ministerial Council are discussed and outlined in its report, launched in November 1995.

The MCEETYA (1995, 1) report also continues the theme of equity. Most of the eight priority areas identified explicitly address issues associated with equity in access, participation, and outcomes in the provision of education in Australia[ii]. The first priority is identified as the implementation of a long-term goal of self-determination by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples based on the notion of independent advisory groups of elected community members (MCEETYA, 1995). This forms just one of 44 recommendations within the AEP review (DEET, 1994b), such as increasing the number of Indigenous administrators and teachers and the provision of community education services, each dependent upon the allocation of financial resources from state, territory and Commonwealth governments (MCEETYA, 1995).